



## Task Force Neighborhood

*By Specialist Joshua Hutcheson*

**T**he streets of Mosul are slowly but surely being cleaned by the soldiers of the 37th Engineer Battalion. Labeled Task Force Neighborhood, the civil operation was modeled after similar successful projects in Baghdad. The vacant lots of the city are filled with a variety of garbage—rotting vegetables, old clothes, and animal waste are the most easily identifiable. The rest has turned into a sort of brown and gray compost pile, home for thousands of flies and food for roaming chickens. This is where Task Force Neighborhood works.

The engineers arrive at the makeshift dumps with an escort of soldiers from the 502d Infantry Regiment and an assortment of tools for cleaning: brooms, shovels, garbage bags, and wheelbarrows. The soldiers have two missions when they go out—to clean the neighborhood and to pump money into the Mosul economy. To achieve these missions, they employ Iraqis to help them clean. A psychological operations team accompanies the engineers with a taped message informing local citizens that they can make money helping the soldiers clean the streets. The unit offers Iraqis “two or three dollars to work.”

The soldiers and Iraqis have at their disposal handheld tools as well as bulldozers and dump trucks. The bigger equipment takes care of the largest portions of trash, then people with shovels and brooms come in to get refuse in hard-to-reach places. So far Task Force Neighborhood has cleaned two vacant lots, one of which had between 30 and 40 dump truckloads of garbage, and the streets and gutters around a downtown mosque. The trash carted away goes to a landfill about a 40-minute drive southwest of town. The engineers have a long, hard job ahead of them. Cleaning the makeshift dumps takes a lot of effort and time. Besides getting rid of newly made dumps all over Mosul, the engineers also have to work to keep clean the areas they just beautified. One recently cleaned dump already has trash in it.



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